

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-19. (Cancelled).

20. (Previously presented) A pulp moulding process including the steps of

- (A) preparing pulp stock;
- (B) forming wet pulp products by means of a forming die; and
- (C) delivering the pulp products to a down-line facility;

wherein the wet pulp products are transferred from the forming die by means of a first die element of a heated transferring die-and-pressing tool arrangement,

wherein the heated transferring die-and-pressing tool arrangement comprises the first die element and a second die element, having a mould cavity therebetween,

wherein the wet pulp products are simultaneously pressed and dried in the heated transferring die-and-pressing tool arrangement, and transferred to the down-line facility by the second die element as pressed, dried pulp products.

21. (Previously presented) The pulp moulding process according to claim 20, including the step of using a heated fluid medium for providing heat in the pressing and drying step.

22. (Previously presented) The pulp moulding process according to claim 21, wherein the heated fluid medium is steam.

23. (Previously presented) The pulp moulding process according to claim 21, wherein the heated fluid medium is thermal oil.

24. (Previously presented) The pulp moulding process according to claim 23, wherein the thermal oil is maintained at a negative gauge pressure.

25-26. (Cancelled)

27. (Currently amended) A tool arrangement for use in a pulp moulding process comprising a male part and a female part, at least one part being provided with a primary fluid passage for receiving a heating fluid therethrough and at least one part being provided with at least one vent so as to allow steam generated during an in-mould pressing and drying step to escape therethrough, wherein the tool arrangement is ~~The heated transfer die and pressing tool arrangement as claimed in claim 25,~~ characterized in being provided with at least one secondary fluid passage for receiving pressurized gas, such as air, therethrough, the secondary fluid passage being orientated so as to communicate gaseously with the vent to force the pressurized gas and the steam generated during the in-mould drying step in one direction through the in-mould wet product.
28. (Currently amended) A tool arrangement for use in a pulp moulding process comprising a male part and a female part, at least one part being provided with a primary fluid passage for receiving a heating fluid therethrough and at least one part being provided with at least one vent so as to allow steam generated during an in-mould pressing and drying step to escape therethrough, wherein at least one of the male part and female part comprises a die element mounted on a plate, having a plenum chamber incorporating the primary fluid passage, and wherein the tool arrangement is ~~The heated transfer die and pressing tool arrangement as claimed in claim 26,~~ characterized in being provided with at least one secondary fluid passage for receiving pressurized gas, such as air, therethrough, the secondary fluid passage being orientated so as to communicate gaseously with the vent to force the pressurized gas and the steam generated during the in-mould drying step in one direction through the in-mould wet product.
29. (Currently amended) A tool arrangement for use in a pulp moulding process comprising a male part and a female part, at least one part being provided with a primary fluid passage for receiving a heating fluid therethrough and at least one part being provided with at least one vent so as to allow steam generated during an in-mould pressing and drying step to escape therethrough, wherein the tool

arrangement is ~~The heated transfer die and pressing tool arrangement as claimed in claim 25,~~ characterized by being provided with a set of secondary fluid passages and a set of vents, the set of secondary fluid passages and the set of vents being staggered relative to each other so as to enhance the substantially uniform flow of pressurized gas through the wet product.

30. (Currently amended) A tool arrangement for use in a pulp moulding process comprising a male part and a female part, at least one part being provided with a primary fluid passage for receiving a heating fluid therethrough and at least one part being provided with at least one vent so as to allow steam generated during an in-mould pressing and drying step to escape therethrough, wherein at least one of the male part and female part comprises a die element mounted on a plate, having a plenum chamber incorporating the primary fluid passage, and wherein the tool arrangement is ~~The heated transfer die and pressing tool arrangement as claimed in claim 26,~~ characterized by being provided with a set of secondary fluid passages and a set of vents, the set of secondary fluid passages and the set of vents being staggered relative to each other so as to enhance the substantially uniform flow of pressurized gas through the wet product.
31. (Previously presented) The heated transfer die-and-pressing tool arrangement as claimed in claim 27, characterized by being provided with a set of secondary fluid passages and a set of vents, the set of secondary fluid passages and the set of vents being staggered relative to each other so as to enhance the substantially uniform flow of pressurized gas through the wet product.
32. (Previously presented) The heated transfer die-and-pressing tool arrangement as claimed in claim 28, characterized by being provided with a set of secondary fluid passages and a set of vents, the set of secondary fluid passages and the set of vents being staggered relative to each other so as to enhance the substantially uniform flow of pressurized gas through the wet product.

33. (Currently amended) A tool arrangement for use in a pulp moulding process comprising a male part and a female part, at least one part being provided with a primary fluid passage for receiving a heating fluid therethrough and at least one part being provided with at least one vent so as to allow steam generated during an in-mould pressing and drying step to escape therethrough, wherein the tool arrangement is ~~The tool arrangement as claimed in claim 25,~~ characterized by the heated transfer die-and-pressing tool arrangement being rotary so as to enable rotary transfer and drying of a wet product between a forming die and a down line facility.

REMARKS

I. Status of the Claims

Claims 25 and 26 have been cancelled without prejudice to the filing of continuing applications. Claims 27-30 and 33 have been amended to incorporate the subject matter of the claims from which they depend. Claims 20-24 and 27-33 are pending in this application, with claims 20-24 having been allowed. No new matter has been added by these amendments.

II. Status of the References Cited in the International Search Report

Applicants respectfully request notification of the status of the references cited in the International Search Report, *i.e.*, whether or not the references were considered during examination of this application.

MPEP 609 provides that the Examiner of a national stage application will consider the documents cited in the international search report in a PCT national stage application if both the search report and the copies of the documents are present in the national stage file. If the references were considered, then form paragraphs 6.53 or 6.54 may be used to notify the Applicants. *See Id.* If the references were not considered, then form paragraph 6.55 may be used. *Id.* Finally, if the references were considered, Applicants may have the references printed on the face of the resulting patent by providing a separate listing of the references to the Patent Office, such as on a form PTO-1449. *See Id.*

Applicants note that the Office has received both the search report and the references cited therein, as indicated in the Notice of Acceptance of Application under 35 U.S.C. § 371 and 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495, mailed on February 20, 2002. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request notification of whether or not the references were considered by the Examiner during prosecution, for example using form paragraphs 6.53, 6.54, or 6.55. In addition, Applicants enclose herewith a listing of the references on a form PTO-1449 and request printing of the references on the face of any resultant patent, if the references have been considered.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 25-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), allegedly as anticipated by Chaplin (U.S. Patent No. 2,377,864). Without conceding the correctness of the rejection, Applicants have cancelled claims 25-26, thus rendering the rejection moot. Withdrawal of the rejection is therefore respectfully requested.

IV. Allowed and Allowable Subject Matter and Conclusion

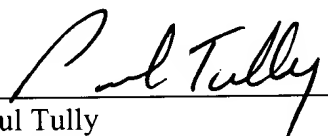
Applicants gratefully acknowledge the allowance of claims 20-24 and the notification that claims 27-33 are allowable if rewritten to include the limitations of the base claims. Claims 27-33 have been amended to include the limitations of the base claims and are therefore in condition for allowance. Notice to this effect is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes that a personal or telephonic interview would expedite prosecution of the instant application, he is invited to call the undersigned at (312) 913-0001.

Respectfully Submitted,

Date: September 15, 2003

By:


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